

New mental health board begins

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Oct 04, 2021 4:00 PM

SANDUSKY — Erie County's new mental health board started operations with new officers and a slimmed-down staff. The new agency began operations on Friday. It met and elected Tom Tucker as the chairman, Rob Quinn as the vice-chairman, Lisa Crescimano as the finance chairman and Steve Poggiali as the planning chairman.

Tucker, no stranger to dealing with organizations that handle public money, is a former school superintendent in Sandusky and Lorain. His education career also included working as a band director and school principal. The board also approved contracts with service providers to run through December, and it extended Diane Taylor's contract as interim executive director through Dec. 31. "Everybody's really happy with Diane at this point," Tucker said. The board eventually plans to hire an executive director under a two-year contract; Taylor has indicated she would be interested.

The board's next meeting will be at 4:30 p.m. on Oct. 19 at the Erie County Services Center. The new board will have regular meetings on the third Tuesday of each month, Taylor said. The board's staff now consists of two people, down from four when it worked for a two-county board for Erie and Ottawa counties. The current staff is Taylor and Patty Notestine, the office manager. Maria Robinson, the chief financial officer, resigned to accept a new job, Taylor said. Hiring a new CFO is the job of the executive director, not the board, Tucker said. In the meantime, the board has contracted for the mental health board for Seneca, Sandusky, Wyandot and Ottawa counties to help with handling finances on a temporary basis. Tucker said the board will be busy working on its bylaws and studying contracts with its providers, with an aim toward approving six-month contracts for the first half of 2022. The board's normal fiscal year runs from July 1 to the end of June. The staff moved a few weeks ago into offices at the services center, 2900 Columbus Ave. The telephone number for the agency remains the same, 419-627-1908. The building that housed the board's former offices, at 1907 E. Perkins Ave., is for sale. The building has not sold yet, and the board has not yet received a good offer for it, Taylor said.

The board is operating with 11 members and has three vacancies. Board members named by the Erie County commissioners are Tucker, Rob Quinn, Alex Jones, Marie Hildebrandt and Steve Poggiali. The state named the Rev. Herman Robinson, Crescimano, Clifton Frisby, Alexis Lewis, Katheryn Mueller and Evelyn Quinn. That leaves three vacancies on the 11-member board. "We have not appointed the

remainder of the members. We are hopeful the state will allow us to continue to shrink the board,” county commissioner Matt Old said last week.

The new board was created after county commissioners voted to split off a former board serving Erie and Ottawa counties. Ottawa County now belongs to a board that serves Sandusky, Seneca, Wyandot and Ottawa counties.